



# ***NEWS RELEASE***

## **PRESS OFFICE**

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## ***SBA's NEWLY-EXPANDED PRO-Net GIVES SMALL FIRMS MORE ACCESS TO FEDERAL CONTRACTS***

**WASHINGTON** - Small businesses interested in doing business in the nearly \$200 billion per year federal marketplace now have one more powerful tool to help them thanks to a major enhancement of the U.S. Small Business Administration's (SBA) PRO-Net database. The expansion to the Internet-accessed database will allow direct e-mail notification from contracting officials to interested firms, an important link in the new federal procurement environment.

**"Everywhere you look, small business owners are jumping into e-commerce, and the trend is exactly the same for federal contracting - you have got to get online,"** said SBA Administrator Aida Alvarez. **"The federal government spends nearly \$200 billion for everything from paper clips to rocket engines. This is a tremendous marketplace for America's small businesses and PRO-Net makes it all possible online and up-to-date."**

PRO-Net is a web-based site open to all, but used especially by purchasing officials and small businesses seeking federal, state and private contracts. It helps procurement officers fill contracts and small companies market their firms to government agencies. PRO-Net can be found on the SBA's Web site at <http://pro-net.sba.gov>.

Small businesses with an existing PRO-Net profile will be able to receive contracting opportunities via e-mail after filling out an electronic registration form. Links to these forms show up automatically after a company accesses and updates its individual PRO-Net profile.

One link gives the small business access to the Department of Defense's Central Contractor Registration (CCR). The other link places the small business into the General Services Administration's Electronic Posting System (EPS). The EPS system acts like an electronic post office and currently relays contracting notices from 20 federal agencies, with more to be added soon.

A registered small business operator who uses an e-store/e-mall Web address can make use of another system enhancement by adding that address to the electronic PRO-Net profile. These Internet locations, which are different from a company's home page, are often used by small businesses selling their products or services electronically.

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Small business users will also find the system “friendly” when it comes to the search function. PRO-Net has been redesigned to permit “full text” searches. Previously, a user would have to enter an exact phrase to have the system identify a small business with the requested characteristics. Now, the system will generate a list based on the exact word, or any of its close derivatives, making the system much more useful.

There are nearly 200,000 small, disadvantaged and women-owned businesses already listed on PRO-Net, including the more than 5,000 firms certified under the SBA’s 8(a) business development program. The three largest concentrations of current PRO-Net registrants are in business services, engineering and retailing. The three geographical areas most represented are the metropolitan areas surrounding Washington, DC, Los Angeles and Chicago.

The system can be used free of charge by small businesses looking to partner with other small companies to handle the larger, more complex contracts. It also has a special section dedicated to subcontracting opportunities at <http://web.sba.gov/subnet>.

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*For more information on all of SBA’s programs for small businesses, call the SBA Answer Desk at 1-800 U ASK SBA, or visit the SBA’s extensive Web site at [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov).*